

Chairman Towns' statement:

"I am pleased to join Representatives Van Hollen and Platts today in support of bi-partisan legislation to strengthen one of our most important weapons in the fight against government waste, fraud, and abuse: federal whistleblower protections."

"Whistleblower protection is a critical component of government accountability. At a time when America needs the best value for every dollar spent, we need these protections now more than ever – and particularly now that billions of stimulus dollars, and billions more aimed at stabilizing the financial system, are at stake."

"The legislation will ensure that federal employees responsible for monitoring the financial recovery programs are not deterred from reporting any mismanagement of taxpayer dollars."

"Federal employees are often in the best position to call attention to illegality or waste in government operations because they witness what is happening inside our government on a day-to-day basis."

"But, under the current, inadequate system, employees can be fired or disciplined for disclosing evidence of waste, fraud or abuse if an administrative judge determines it was part of their job to do so! That's contrary to the whole point of the whistleblower law!"

"We need to encourage federal auditors, safety inspectors, and other employees to perform their roles diligently and effectively, and with the public interest in mind. And, they need to be able to do so without fear of retaliation. This important legislation takes a landmark step in that direction."

"Importantly, the legislation also extends strong whistleblower protections to employees of government contractors. Congress wisely included similar protections for private recipients of stimulus funds. However, no similar safeguard was included when Congress passed the

Emergency Economic Stabilization Act — the “bailout” — last fall.”

“This bill would extend the right to disclose waste, fraud and abuse without fear of retaliation to employees of all government contractors, including companies that accepted contracts for “bailout” funding. The Oversight Committee has documented the accountability and transparency shortcomings of the TARP program, and we will continue to do so. However, this legislation provides an immediate accountability fix to that program.”

“Lastly, whistleblower protections are important not only in safeguarding America’s tax dollars; we need them also to better protect our families. Toward that end, we have worked closely with the House Intelligence Committee in drafting strong whistleblower protections for national security personnel.”

“The House overwhelmingly passed similar bipartisan legislation in 2007. It was adopted again by the House, without dissent, earlier this year as part of the stimulus legislation, but was unfortunately removed in conference. We need to finish the job — for the American taxpayers, and our families.”

“As Chairman of the Committee on House Oversight and Government Reform, I am pleased to join Rep. Van Hollen and Rep. Platts in support of this measure and I urge its prompt passage. I look forward to working with them to enact this good government legislation as soon as possible.”

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